

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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WSP Awarded Top Honors from Governor Locke

At a formal ceremony yesterday at St. Martin's College in Lacey, the Washington State Patrol received the state's top honor from Governor Locke: *the Governor's Award for Quality and Performance*, for the **Amber Alert Web Portal Project**. In addition, the WSP's **El Protector Program** won in the category of *Public Benefit and Organizational Learning and Growth*.

"I couldn't be prouder of the employees of the Washington State Patrol who come to work every day to make a difference and impact the quality of life for our citizens," said Chief Lowell M. Porter. "Both of these awards are examples of thinking outside the box, being creative and coming up with ideas to better serve the public safety needs of our citizens," he said.

The **Amber Alert Web Portal (AAWP)** project was a team effort with the Department of Information Services, the Washington Broadcasters Association, the Department of Transportation and numerous other private and public partners. In 1996, nine-year-old Amber Hagerman was abducted and murdered in the Dallas area. In response to this tragedy, broadcasters and law enforcement in 49 states, including Washington, implemented early warning AMBER Alert programs to engage the public to find abducted children. Washington broadcasters and law enforcement raised concerns with their original manual alerting process – it was complex, time consuming and information was inconsistent and hard to find. They wanted a single place to find information.

Local and state agencies partnered with private organizations in the DIS Digital Government Academy and implemented a powerful new approach to conduct AMBER Alerts. Participants developed an AMBER Alert Web Portal (www.AMBERAlert911.com) enabling law enforcement to distribute detailed information simultaneously to thousands of sources including law enforcement, broadcasters and the public via pagers, cell phones, e-mail and faxes. Participants streamlined the AMBER Alert process and implemented a public-private partnership enabling the use of the Portal at no cost.

Washington launched the Web Portal on July 9, 2004. On July 19, Governor Locke unveiled the Portal at a national press event. By that time, 11 additional states recognized the Portal as a national best practice and committed to replicate it in their states.

(More)

Also a partnership between public and private entities, the **El Protector Program** addressed a serious lack of communication between law enforcement and the Spanish-speaking community in the Yakima region. In 2002, Hispanic-surnamed drivers were involved in 29.6% of the fatal and injury collisions in the Yakima area, totaling a loss of 16 lives. Through partnerships within the Hispanic community, troopers identified there was a communication gap regarding Washington's traffic safety laws due to the language barrier with non-English speaking drivers.

The WSP created a performance measure aimed to reduce fatal and injury collisions by 5% annually on state and interstate highways. Additionally, the WSP took this goal one step further by concentrating on educating the Hispanic population about this mission.

With the support of many stakeholders, El Protector ("The Protector") pilot program was launched to open lines of communication, reduce traffic-related crime, and heighten the Hispanic community's awareness of Washington's traffic safety rules. In addition, an El Protector Citizen advisory board was formed and a law enforcement committee in order to gain access to key organizations and to guide the process with the involvement of the Hispanic community.

Since implementing the pilot program in 2003, there has been a 16% decrease in the number of Hispanic fatal and injury collisions in District 3 (Yakima). The number of collisions involving fatalities dropped by 2, or 14.3%, from 2002 to 2003. Injury collisions dropped by 27, or 16.3%. In 2003 only 2 lives were lost compared to 16 lives lost in the previous year, for a reduction of 87.5%. WSP plans to implement this program statewide in other areas with increasing fatal and injury collisions among the Hispanic population.

Photos are available. If you would like a copy please call (360) 753-5299 to request them.

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